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## Sectoral differences in the perception of toxic leadership

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### Abstract

Toxic leadership has become the focus of attention in recent years for many organizations. In general terms, toxic leadership refers to leader behaviors leading to negative outcomes. Toxic leadership can result in decreasing personnel efficiency and adversely affecting cost-benefit relationship for organizations. Simultaneously, this concept is alleged to cause high rates of absenteeism, increasing personnel transfer, poor performance and groupthink. Despite the growing interest in the world of science, it is observed that systematic, scientific field works on toxic leadership are inadequate. Lack of fieldwork data can be considered as an important challenge to define the concept of toxic leadership properly.

The purpose of this study is to test compliance of dimensions and scale in toxic leadership model developed by Çelebi et al. (2015) in Turkey. For this purpose, it was investigated whether there is a difference in the validity of the model according to the product and service sector. Automotive manufacturing sector was chosen in physical product industry and hospitality sector was chosen in the service industry. A questionnaire was conducted on 385 people, including 204 people from automotive manufacturing and 181 people from hospitality sector. Confirmatory factor analysis in Lisrel program was conducted to test the scale and t-test was performed for the cross-sectoral differences. The results showed that toxic leadership is defined by 5 dimensions and there are various differences between the sectors.

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### 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing attention to the studies focusing on the dark side of leadership. (Burton, Taylor & Barber, 2014; Tepper, 2007) For example, in 2003 the United States Secretary of the Army Thomas E., asked for an assessment of how to determine those with the toxic leadership style from US Army War College

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(Reed, 2004). It is understandable that US Army attempts to define toxic leadership as an organization with poor leadership can cost lives. (Schmidt, A.A., 2008) However, toxic leadership can lead to negative consequences not only in the military organizations, but in non-military organizations as well. Toxic leadership is claimed to result in decreasing personnel efficiency, adversely affecting cost-benefit relationship for organizations, high absenteeism rate, increasing personnel transfer (Wilson-Starks, 2003), poor performance, groupthink (Schmidt, 2008; Kırbaç, 2013), decreasing satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mehta & Maheswari, 2013).

However in all studies drawing attention to these negative effects, no consensus on a definition of toxic leadership has been reached. In their studies, every researcher uses their own definition and uses the term ‘toxic’ to define a wide variety of dysfunctional leaders. This not only makes it difficult to understand what toxic leadership is, it also makes it problematic to develop a reliable scale needed to empirically investigate the term further (Schmidt, 2008 ). For the followers to reach a settlement on which behaviors are destructive to themselves and to the organization enables the interventions to reduce the toxicity from leaders. It is also important for it prevents such leaders from entering organizations (Pelletier, 2010).

In toxic leadership framework, the first goal of this study is to test compliance of dimensions and scale in toxic leadership model developed by Çelebi et al. (2015) in Turkey. The second goal is to research if perceived toxic leadership differs according to sectors. In order to reach these goals, the concepts referred in the literature review to define the dark side of leadership will be revisited. Additionally, we will address to the similarities and differences of a variety of toxic leadership concepts. The toxic leadership scales referred in the literature review will also be addressed. Research method and the analyses will follow in the next session. In the last section, the results will be discussed and propositions will be made.

## 2. Literature Review

In the literature there are different concepts used in order to refer to the dark side of leadership such as petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994, 1997), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2007), aversive leadership (Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin & Stovall, 2007), destructive leadership (Einarsen, Skogstad, Leseth & Aasland, 2002; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007), bullying (Rayner and Cooper, 1997) and toxic leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 2004). Short definitions of these concepts are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Concepts used to refer the dark side of leadership

<b>Petty tyranny</b>	( Ashforth, 1997: 126 )	The tendency to lord one's power over others.
<b>Abusive supervision</b>	( Tepper, 2000: 178 )	Sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact.
<b>Destructive leadership</b>	( Einarsen et al., 2007: 208 )	The systematic and repeated behaviour by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organisation by undermining and/or sabotaging the organisation's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates
<b>Workplace bullying</b>	( Einarsen et al., 2003 )	Persistent negative behaviours perpetrated by one or more individuals on a less powerful 'target' who is often unable to defend themselves
<b>Toxic leadership</b>		*Intentionally left blank as detailed discussion will be provided later.

Whicker, who used toxic leader term for the first time in literature, defines toxic leaders as “maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent, even malicious. They succeed by tearing other down” (Whicker, 1996). Lipman-Blumen (2005a) defines toxic leaders as “leaders who engage in numerous destructive behaviors and who exhibit certain dysfunctional personal characteristics”. According to Lipman-Blumen (2005a), in order to deem this behavior and characteristics as toxic, they should damage followers and organizations seriously and perennially. According to

Wilson-Starks (2003), toxic leadership “is a leadership approach that harms people - and, eventually, the company as well - through the poisoning of enthusiasm, creativity, autonomy, and innovative expression.” Goldman (2006) approached toxic leadership from a psychological perspective and indicated that personality disorders are a source of a highly toxic and dysfunctional organizational behavior.

There are also some studies in the literature to classify toxic leadership. For example Lubit (2004) classified toxic leadership under four main titles as narcissistic, aggressive, rigid, and impaired. According to the author, the underlying reasons of these behaviors are difficult personality traits, mood disorders or impulsivity. Reed (2004) explains the three basic elements of toxic leadership as “an apparent lack of concern for the wellbeing of subordinates, a personality or interpersonal technique that negatively affects organizational climate and a conviction by subordinates that the leader is motivated primarily by self-interest”.

As can be seen in the literature review, a variety of concepts are used along with ‘toxic leadership’ when referring to the dark side of leadership. Pelletier (2010) analyzed the behavioral characteristics of the concepts given in Table 1 and stated that there are behavioral overlaps within these concepts, but there are also behaviors that are unique to each concept. For example, presenting toxic agendas as noble visions, pitting in-group members against out-group members and ostracizing/disenfranchising employees are behavioral characteristics pertaining only to toxic leadership, while demeaning/marginalizing, or degrading, ridiculing/mock, blaming others for the leader’s mistakes are common behavioral characteristics of all the concepts in Table 1 (Pelletier, 2010).

On the other hand, definitions and dimensions of toxic leadership also differ. Dimensional differences are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Dimensions of toxic leadership according to different definitions

	<b>Whicker ( 1996 )</b>	<b>Lipman- Blumen ( 2005 )</b>	<b>Wilson-Starks ( 2003 )</b>	<b>Reed ( 2004 )</b>	<b>Flynn ( 1999 )</b>
<b>Dimensions:</b>					
Abusive to Subordinates	X	X	X	X	X
Controlling / Stifling		X	X		X
Narcissistic	X	X		X	

\*Short version of the table from Schmidt, 2008, p: 73

There is a limited number of studies in the literature aimed at developing scales to investigate the dark side of leadership. For instance, The Petty Tyranny in Organizations Scale was designed to explore aspects of ineffective leadership along six dimensions: arbitrariness and self aggrandizement, belittling subordinates, lack of consideration, a forcing style of conflict resolution, discouraging initiative, and noncontingent punishment (Ashforth, 1994). On the other hand, Shaw et al. ( 2011 ) developed a scale to measure the nature of destructive leadership and identified seven dimensions of destructive leadership.

There are also studies in Turkey with an aim to develop scales to define the features of toxic leaders. For instance, Uymaz (2013) identified the following six types of destructive leadership: authoritarian leadership, inadequate leadership skills, unethical behaviors, inability to deal with new technology and other changes, callousness toward subordinates and nepotism. Uymaz (2013) stated that some of the terms used in the study for the development of scale had been taken from the study by Shaw et al. (2011).

However, as stated before, the terms “petty tyranny” and “destructive leadership” do not fully meet the definition of toxic leadership. Schmidt (2008) claimed that toxic leadership is a term independent from these and that the toxic leadership scale he developed would improve the pre-existing destructive leadership scales. In Schmidt’s study, toxic leadership loaded under six factors as abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissism, self-promotion and unpredictability. In the Romanian adaptation of the same scale, toxic leadership loaded under four factors: self-promotion, abusive leadership, unpredictability and authoritarianism (Popa, Rotarescu, Sulea, 2013).

Considering the different definitions and classifications given above, it is possible to say that toxic leadership is a comprehensive concept and has multiple dimensions. Despite the growing interest in the world of science, it is observed that systematic, scientific field works on toxic leadership are inadequate. Lack of experimental data can be considered as an important challenge to define the concept of toxic leadership properly. In particular, there are few studies in the subject of developing toxic leadership scale.

Starting from this serious gap in the literature, an applied research was carried out on both product and service sectors using the toxic leadership scale developed by Celebi et al. (2015) in Turkey. As stated by the researchers, Schmidt's (2008) toxic leadership scale was used to a large extent in the development of this scale. The purpose of this research was to validate the conformity of this scale and the dimensions to different sectors.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Goal

In toxic leadership framework, the first goal of this study is to test compliance of dimensions and scale in toxic leadership model developed by Çelebi et al (2015) in Turkey. The second goal is to research if perceived toxic leadership differs according to sectors.

#### 3.2. Sample and Data Collection

A questionnaire study was conducted on 385 respondents working in hospitality and automotive manufacturing sector. Respondents only included those without a managerial position. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed with the obtained data for the toxic leadership scale developed by Çelebi et al. (2015). Researchers explained toxic leadership in 4 dimensions as unappreciativeness, utilitarian, egoistic and psychological dysfunction.

#### 3.3. Analyses and Results

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics of the Respondents		Automotive Manufacturing		Hospitality		Number/Rate Total Numb er %	
Gender	Female	101	49,5	45	24,9	146	37,9
	Male	103	50,5	136	75,1	239	62,1
Age	18-27	114	55,9	61	33,7	175	45,5
	28-37	45	22,1	68	37,6	113	29,4
	38-47	27	13,2	32	17,7	59	15,3
	48-57	6	2,9	16	8,8	22	5,7
	58+	12	5,9	4	2,2	16	4,2
Income	1000-2000	96	47,1	101	55,8	197	51,3
	2001-3000	68	33,3	44	24,3	112	29,9
	3001-4000	36	17,6	28	15,5	64	16,7
	4001+	4	2,0	8	4,4	12	3,1
Working Year	Less than 1 Year	84	41,1	25	13,8	111	28,8
	1-3	30	14,7	34	18,8	64	16,6
	3-5	45	22,1	38	21,0	83	23,6
	5-7	24	11,8	38	21,0	62	16,1
	7-9	12	5,9	22	12,2	34	8,8
	9+	9	4,4	24	13,3	31	8,1
Sector	Automotive	-	-	-	-	204	53,0
	Manufacturing	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Hospitality	-	-	-	-	181	47,0
<b>Total</b>		<b>204</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100</b>

When the most common characteristics of respondents participating in the study were examined, it was observed that 61,8% are male, 45,5% are in the age range of 18-27, 51.3% have an income between 1000-2000 TL. 28.8% of respondents are comprised of personnel working for 1 year and less, and 53% work in the automotive manufacturing sector.

In this study, toxic leadership scale developed by Çelebi et al (2005) tried to be verified by the data in our study. This four-factor scale could not be confirmed. Although necessary changes were made in line with the proposed modifications, acceptable fit values could not be reached. It was thought that this was because this research was conducted in service sector where teachers work and the respondents were not compatible with the participants in this study in terms of education levels. Therefore it was decided to carry out exploratory factor analysis on the data of this research. Exploratory factor analysis results are presented below.

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.926
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	15708,138
df	903
sig	0.000

KMO is a measure of sampling adequacy (Hair, Andersen, Tatham & Bileck, 1998:99). As seen in the table it is very high ( 0.926 ). So the research is extremely valid. According to the results of the factor analysis performed in this study, toxic leadership scale was grouped under five factors. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results of Toxic Leadership Scale

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigene Value	% of Variance
<b>Factor 1: EGOCENTRISM</b>		22,059	51,300
S21 He thinks he is perfect.	0,796		
S20 He thinks he is more talented than the other managers.	0,730		
S29 He tries to do his work flawless just because of his next interest.	0,712		
S19 He believes the future and course of this workplace will only get better with him.	0,711		
S23 He takes arbitrary decisions or behaviors without any justification.	0,675		
S18 He believes he deserves his position (even higher positions) far and away.	0,656		
S17 He believes he is so precious that he deserves everything good.	0,643		
S25 When we as personnel make mistakes, he does not share responsibility, he offloads the blame on one of us.	0,639		
S30 Promotion is one of the most important things for him.	0,631		
S22 He is very pleased with compliments and praise. He behaves very well to the personnel talking to him in this way.	0,627		
S28 He takes upon advantages and yields of the success which does not belong to him	0,612		
S27 He treats preferentially only those of whom he can take advantage	0,592		
S24 He adopts a manner of affectation to look good to his superiors.	0,592		
S31 He always prioritizes his personal interests.	0,591		
S26 He puts his own failures on our shoulders.	0,583		
S43 His behaviors are destructive rather than constructive.	0,408		
<b>Factor 2: NEGATIVE MOOD</b>		2,566	5,968
S36 His behaviors are imbalanced and unpredictable.	0,696		
S42 Personnel cannot come close to him when he is angry, dispirited and furious.	0,687		
S35 He reflects his negative mood on the loudness of his voice tone	0,686		
S32 He has sudden bursts of anger, short temper and impulsive behaviors.	0,645		

<b>S40</b> He intervenes in everything since he does not rely on anyone but himself.	0,617		
<b>S34</b> He is rude and offending to us	0,588		
<b>S41</b> He leads to grouping rather than unity in workplace. He creates proponent and opponent groups.	0,541		
<b>Factor 3: UNAPPRECIATION</b>		2,258	5,252
<b>S1</b> He adopts a condescending attitude.	0,825		
<b>S4</b> He humiliates his personnel among others.	0,790		
<b>S2</b> He doesn't like communicating to his personnel outside of work.	0,738		
<b>S3</b> I know he talks to others pessimistically about his personnel.	0,731		
<b>S7</b> I think he doesn't care about his personnel.	0,618		
<b>S6</b> He constantly and disturbingly says that his personnel fail in their work.	0,579		
<b>S5</b> He allusively and constantly reminds his personnel previous mistakes/faults.	0,508		
<b>S11</b> He is not flexible to his personnel.	0,441		
<b>Factor 4: INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY</b>		1,653	3,844
<b>S38</b> He is erratic.	0,763		
<b>S39</b> He does not support and rely on his personnel; he does not show his support. We feel alone.	0,763		
<b>S37</b> As personnel, we have to behave according to his mood.	0,751		
<b>S33</b> His mood determines work climate and aura. If he is angry, there is tension in workplace, if he is happy, there is positive aura in the workplace.	0,644		
<b>S14</b> He always commands when he talks to his personnel.	0,632		
<b>S16</b> He does not act as colleague, manager, or counterpart, he acts as boss.	0,520		
<b>Factor 5: AUTOCRATICAL MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOUR</b>		1,369	3,184
<b>S13</b> He generally talks about subjects that he gives importance; he does not dwell on the subjects we suggest.	0,733		
<b>S10</b> He dislikes when we hazard an opinion in contrast to his ideas.	0,648		
<b>S8</b> He has a negative attitude towards us without listening to us or letting us explain in any situation.	0,640		
<b>S12</b> He runs the operation with his own decisions rather than common decisions.	0,638		
<b>S15</b> He wants everything to be done in the way he commands.	0,490		
<b>S9</b> He hardly lets us try new methods/practices/innovations regarding work.	0,457		
<b>TOTAL</b>			69.547

As observed in the table, toxic leadership scale was categorized under five factors. Total variance of the scale is 69.547%. Highest factor load was formed in the first factor with 51.3%. When the total value of the scale is considered, it is observed that the expressions loaded under egocentrism, which is the first factor, substantially define toxic leadership. Negative mood ranks second and it is followed by unappreciation. Instability and uncertainty, and autocratic management behaviors are the last factors.

When variables under egocentrism factor were examined, self-centered thoughts of the leader and reflection of this thought on his behaviors were observed. Negative behaviors were discovered through the variables under second factor negative mood. We observed underestimating, undervaluing behaviors of the leader towards his personnel in the third factor. Negative reflection of leader's uncertain, unstable behaviors on personnel was determined by the variables under the fourth factor. The variables of the fifth factor revealed that the leader adopts autocratic management style.

In order to verify the factors that emerged in exploratory factor analysis, results undergoing confirmatory factor analysis are presented in the following tables.

In the first test carried out according to confirmatory factor analysis results of the five-dimensional toxic leadership scale, model fit values (Chi-square / SD , GFI, AGFI, RMSR, RMSEA and CFI values) were considered not to be in

the acceptable level. In line with the modifications suggested by the program, relevant variables were eliminated. After the modification, model fit values reached to an acceptable level.

Table 6. Toxic Leadership Scale Test

Fit Index	Before Modification	After Modification	Acceptable Fit
<b>Absolute Fit Value</b>			
Chi-Square ( $X^2$ )	1598,35	416,51	
Degree of freedom	204	85	
Chi-Square/sd	7,84	4,90	1-5
GFI	0,75	0,90	$0,90 \leq GFI \leq 0,95$
AGFI	0,69	0,85	$0,85 \leq AGFI \leq 0,90$
RMSR	0,10	0,07	$0,05 \leq RMSR \leq 0,08$
RMSEA	0,13	0,080	$0,05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0,08$
<b>Incremental Fit Value</b>			
CFI	0,93	0,95	$0,95 \leq CFI \leq 0,97$
NNFI	0,92	0,92	$0,95 \leq NNFI \leq 0,97$
NFI	0,92	0,92	$0,95 \leq NFI \leq 0,97$

Table 7. Values of Toxic Leadership Variables

Variables	Standard Value	R <sup>2</sup>	Error Variance	t Value
<b>Factor 1: EGOCENTRISM ( Cronbach <math>\alpha</math> : 0.793 )</b>	<b>0,87</b>	<b>0,75</b>	<b>0,25</b>	<b>14,38</b>
S21 He thinks he is perfect.	0,73	0,53	0,56	14,09
S20 He thinks he is more talented than the other managers.	0,76	0,58	0,60	11,02
S26 He puts his own failures on our shoulders.	0,86	0,74	0,34	16,49
<b>Factor 2: NEGATIVE MOOD ( Cronbach <math>\alpha</math> : 0.844 )</b>	<b>0,95</b>	<b>0,91</b>	<b>0,90</b>	<b>18,23</b>
S42 Personnel cannot come close to him when he is angry, dispirited and furious.	0,85	0,72	0,36	19,51
S34 He is rude and offending to us	0,44	0,19	0,90	8,61
S32 He has sudden bursts of anger, short temper and impulsive behaviors.	0,85	0,72	0,41	9,29
<b>Factor 3: UNAPPRECIATION ( Cronbach <math>\alpha</math> : 0.76 )</b>	<b>0,73</b>	<b>0,53</b>	<b>0,47</b>	<b>13,20</b>
S7 I think he doesn't care about his personnel.	0,69	0,48	0,65	13,70
S5 He allusively and constantly reminds his personnel previous mistakes/faults.	0,85	0,73	0,34	7,16
S6 He constantly and disturbingly says that his personnel fail in their work.	0,76	0,58	0,55	15,17
<b>Factor 4: INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY ( Cronbach <math>\alpha</math> : 0.748 )</b>	<b>0,87</b>	<b>0,75</b>	<b>0,25</b>	<b>8,12</b>
S16 He does not act as colleague, manager, or counterpart, he acts as boss.	0,45	0,20	0,90	13,20
S37 As personnel, we have to behave according to his mood.	0,82	0,67	0,42	8,31
S33 His mood determines work climate and aura. If he is angry, there is tension in workplace, if he is happy, there is positive aura in the workplace.	0,74	0,55	0,60	8,09
<b>Factor 5: AUTOCRATICAL MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR ( Cronbach <math>\alpha</math> : 0.827 )</b>	<b>0,83</b>	<b>0,69</b>	<b>0,31</b>	<b>12,55</b>
S13 He generally talks about subjects that he gives importance; he does not dwell on the subjects we suggest.	0,73	0,53	0,63	12,76
S12 He runs the operation with his own decisions rather than common decisions.	0,85	0,73	0,36	14,25
S10 He dislikes when we hazard an opinion in contrast to his ideas.	0,70	0,49	0,54	11,60



The estimated research model is depicted as follows in Figure 1.

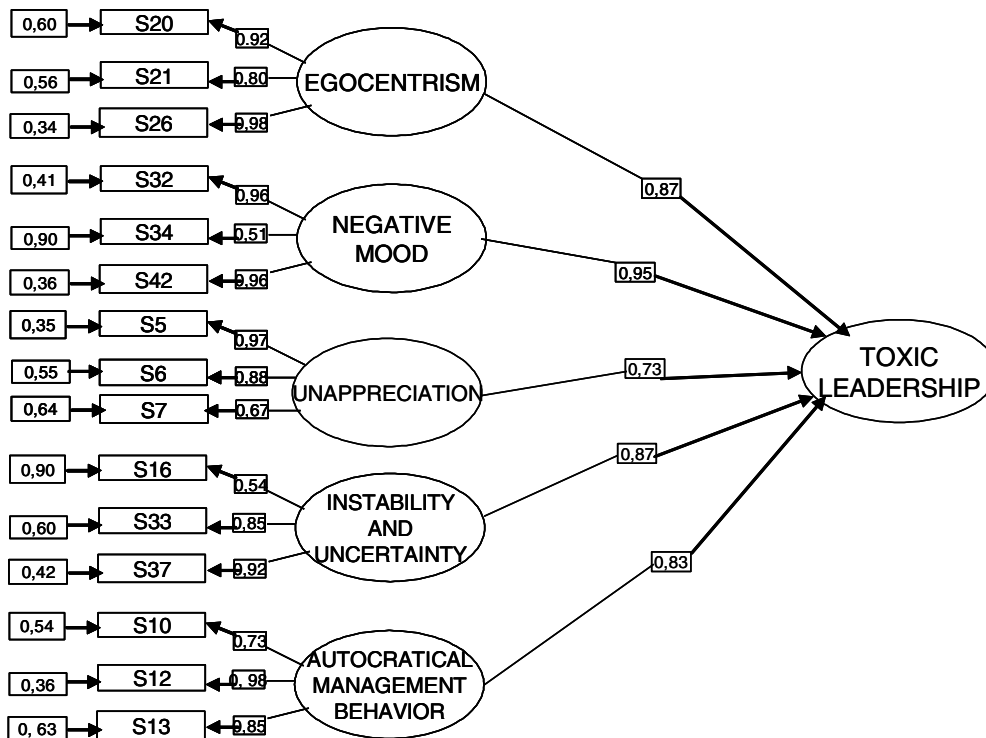


Fig.1. Estimated Model of Toxic Leadership Scale

This research study was performed on two different sectors. Hospitality sector representing service industry and automotive manufacturing sector representing physical product industry were chosen. T-test regarding variables on toxic leadership scale verified in this study was conducted in order to determine whether personnel perceptions vary according to sectors.

Table.8. Difference of Perceptions of Respondents on Toxic Leadership Dimensions according to Sectors

FACTORS	Average Hospitality	Automotive Manufacturing	Sector F	Sig.
Factor 1: EGOCENTRISM	2,7374	2,5562	3,685	0,056
Factor 2: NEGATIVE MOOD	2,8485	2,6145	28,630	<b>0,000</b>
Factor 3: UNAPPRECIATION	2,3781	2,3499	4,965	<b>0,026</b>
Factor 4: INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY	3,0149	3,0559	4,662	<b>0,031</b>
Factor 5: AUTOCRATICAL MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR	2,7451	2,5470	14,868	<b>0,000</b>

According to the research results, attitudes of respondents towards toxic leadership differentiated in 4 factors according to sectors. Whereas it was perceived that negative mood, unappreciation, autocratical management behavior of the leaders are higher in hospitality sector, instability and uncertainty factor was perceived higher in manufacturing sector. Egocentrism factor was perceived similarly in both of the sectors. When averages were examined, the highest average was found in the instability and uncertainty.



#### 4. Conclusion

There has been increased interest by researchers recently in exploring the nature of leadership variously described as tyranny, destructive, abusive, bullying, or toxic. It is important to describe the relationships and differences between these concepts which sometimes used interchangeably. These distinctions are important because they create boundaries around the construct of toxic leadership and enable the development of valid measurement tools to empirically investigate it (Schmidt, 2008). Through the use of valid scales, it will be possible to make comparisons between cultures and sectors and understand the concept of toxic leadership better.

With this aim, the toxic leadership scale developed by Çelebi et al. (2015) was tested to see if it is appropriate for automotive and hospitality sectors. The data from confirmatory factor analysis was not compatible with the model developed by Çelebi et al. (2015). Therefore, an exploratory factor analysis was also carried out on the data. Factors composing toxic leadership scale were categorized under five factors unlike Çelebi et al.(2015)'s study. The explained variance in Çelebi et al.'s study was 67.07% while it was 69.547% in this study. The factor named egocentrism has the highest explained variance with a value of 51.3%. When the variables under this factor were examined, it was seen that leader behaviors associated with selfishness were predominant. In other words, one can infer that it is mostly egocentrism that creates perceived toxic leadership and defines the behaviors of a toxic leader. Other factors identified in the study were negative mood, uappreciation, instability and uncertainty, autocratical management behavior. Additionally, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out on five factors. The variables that were not compatible with the model were eliminated from each of the five factors. Toxic leadership scale was validated through five factors.

According to our research results, attitudes of respondents towards toxic leadership differentiated in 4 factors according to sectors. Whereas it was perceived that negative mood, unappreciation, autocratical management behavior of the leaders are higher in hospitality sector, instability and uncertainty factor was perceived higher in manufacturing sector. Egocentrism factor was perceived similarly in both of the sectors.

Our study also draws attention to the need for more research to determine the dimensions of toxic leadership. Therefore it is believed to be useful to have practices on different sectors and higher examples in the future studies.

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